



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 5

77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD
CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

JUL 12 2010

REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF:

E-19J

Laurie McGilvray, Division Chief
NOAA Office of Ocean and Coastal
Resource Management
1305 East West Highway, N/ORM
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: U.S. EPA Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Lake Superior Natural Estuarine Research Reserve - EIS No. 20100198

Dear Ms. McGilvray:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) has reviewed the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which evaluates the consequences of nominating part of the St. Louis River freshwater estuary and the Lake Superior shoreline as the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve (Reserve). A Management Plan to guide the management of the site for purposes of conducting research, education and outreach activities is also evaluated as part of the Draft EIS. Our review was conducted pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA Implementing Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

A Lake Superior Reserve would represent a significant addition to the Reserve System due to the unique estuarine types not currently represented in the System. The possibility of long- and short-term research projects and programs at the Reserve will ultimately contribute to a better understanding of the larger ecosystem. Development of a Reserve would also result in positive impacts to interpretative and educational programs for local and regional schools, collaboration among research entities operating in the area, and opportunities for federal and state agencies to collaborate with Native American tribes. The proposed integrated approach will support improved management decisions addressing Lake Superior coastal resources.

The Draft EIS documents analysis of a No Action alternative, the Preferred Alternative, and four alternatives consisting of possible alternative boundary configurations. The preferred alternative is the site recommended by the State of Wisconsin with the addition of Oliver Marsh, a small Douglas County parcel adjacent to the St. Louis River, and additional Portions of Wisconsin Point and Allouez Bay.

Based on our review of the Draft EIS, we have rated the Preferred Alternative as Lack of Objections. This rating indicates that our review did not identify any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the Preferred Alternative.

We appreciate the opportunity to be a part of NOAA's planning effort. We look forward to receiving a copy of the Final EIS. Should you have any questions concerning the contents of this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me or Kathleen Kowal of my staff at (312) 353-5206 or send email to kowal.kathleen@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth A. Westlake", written in a cursive style.

Kenneth A. Westlake
Chief, NEPA Implementation Section
Office of Enforcement & Compliance Assurance

Enclosure: Ratings Summary